

Message Text

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COMIDEASTFOR

S E C R E T STATE 038236

EXDIS - MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT ISLAMABAD 01670 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
JIDDA MUSCAT NAIROBI TEHRAN VICTORIA PORT LOUIS MANAMA DHAHRAN
ABU DHABI DOHA KUWAIT 16 FEB 77

QUOTE S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 01670

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MORG, PK, KE, IR, BA, MU, SA, MP

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST FORCE - THE NEW FORMAT

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REF: STATE 30235

1. AS SUGGESTED REFTTEL, FOLLOWING DISCUSSION ON A NEW
MIDDLE EAST FORCE FORMAT PREDICATED ON ASSUMPTION THAT
CURRENT OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN USG AND GOP WILL BE
RESOLVED IN A MANNER SATISFACTORY TO BOTH GOVERNMENTS

BEFORE ANY DISCUSSIONS ON FUTURE OF MIDEASTFOR ARE HELD WITH PAKISTANIS. WITH THAT CAVEAT, AND IF THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS ARE MET, WE BELIEVE THE GOP WOULD CONCUR IN FLAGSHIP VISITS TO KARACHI WITH FREQUENCY SUGGESTED REFTEL.

2. QUESTION OF HOW NEW FORMAT IS PUBLICLY HANDLED IS OF CENTRAL IMPORTANCE. WE UNDERSTAND BAHRAIN'S DESIRE TO BE ABLE TO STATE PUBLICLY THAT OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE AGREED TO SHARE IN SUPPORT OF REGIONAL MIDEASTFOR PRESENCE. HOWEVER, ANY PUBLIC MENTION OF "BASING" OR "HOMEPORTING" ARRANGEMENTS UNDER NEW FORMAT WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOP. STATEMENT WOULD HAVE TO WALK NARROW LINE BETWEEN MEETING BAHRAIN'S CONCERNS THAT SUPPORT OF OTHER LITTORAL STATES BE EVIDENT AND THE GOP'S WORRY - SHARED BY OTHER LITTORAL STATES WE ASSUME - THAT IT NOT SEEM AS IF IT IS EVEN PARTIALLY REPLACING BAHRAIN AS MIDEASTFOR'S HOME PORT. IF DECISION IS MADE TO GO AHEAD WITH NEW FORMAT, AND IF OTHER CONDITIONS MENTIONED BELOW ARE MET, WE WOULD PLAN TO TELL PAKS THAT BAHRAIN HOMEPORTING ARRANGEMENT IS BEING TERMINATED AND WE WOULD THEREFORE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO SCHEDULE SOMEWHAT GREATER NUMBER OF PORT CALLS OF MIDEASTFOR SHIPS AT KARACHI. ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT WOULD HAVE TO REFLECT THIS POSITION.

3. GOP ACQUIESCENCE IN PLAN WOULD ALSO REQUIRE THAT AS MANY OTHER PORT AS POSSIBLE ARE ALSO USED. IF BAHRAIN, KARACHI AND ONLY ONE OR TWO OTHER PORTS ARE INCLUDED, IT WOULD BE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR GOP TO AGREE. ESPECIALLY IF, FOR EXAMPLE, SAUDIS DID NOT PARTICIPATE AND TOLD GOP OF THEIR DECISION, THE GOP WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO GO AHEAD WITH A SECRET

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MAJOR SUPPORTER AND ISLAMIC FRIEND NOT PARTICIPATING. HOWEVER, IF ALL PORTS MENTIONED PARA 8 REFTEL ARE INCLUDED IN NEW FORMAT, WE SEE NO DIFFICULTY IN ADDING KARACHI AS WELL.

4. ADDITIONAL CONCERN WILL BE NEED TO HOLD BERTH TIME FOR FLAGSHIP DURING ITS PORT CALLS TO ABSOLUTE MINIMUM. PORT SPACE AT KARACHI IS VERY TIGHT WITH LONG TURN-AROUND TIME. BERTHS ARE GIVEN FREE OF CHARGE TO USN THEREBY CAUSING FINANCIAL LOSS TO GOP, AND GREATER DELAY IN DELIVERY OF COMMERCIAL CARGO WITH NEGATIVE IMPACT ON COMMERCIAL SECTOR AND VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH WE SEE NO PROBLEM WITH TWO FLAGSHIP VISITS OF THREE WEEKS EACH PER YEAR, TIME AT BERTH RATHER THAN ANCHORAGE WOULD HAVE TO BE HELD TO A MINIMUM. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, EMBASSY IS CONCERNED ABOUT DRAMATIC INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PORT VISITS TO KARACHI, AND WE ARE SENDING A SEPARATE MESSAGE CONTAINING SUGGESTIONS ON HOW WE CAN RATIONALIZE AND BETTER COORDINATE SHIP VISITS TO PAKISTAN. TIMING OF MIDEASTFOR PORT CALLS WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED WITHIN OUTLINES OF A GENERAL PORT CALL POLICY, WHICH MIGHT

INCLUDE A CUTBACK OF OTHER CALLS TO ACCOMMODATE NEW MIDEASTFOR REQUIREMENTS.

5. AS NOTED PARA SEVEN REFTEL, COMIDEASTFOR WOULD PROVIDE ITS OWN PORT LIAISON/SUPPORT PERSONNEL AS NEEDED FOR THE VISITS. THIS IS IMPORTANT POINT SINCE INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PORT CALLS BY USS SHIPS TO KARACHI MENTIONED ABOVE IS ALREADY STRAINING OUR OWN RESOURCES. IF LOGISTIC SUPPORT FLIGHTS ARE ALSO FLOWN, NEED FOR COMIDEASTFOR ASSISTANCE IN ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT WILL BE EVEN GREATER. (PARA SEVEN REFTEL GIVES INACCURATE IMPRESSION THAT REPLENISHMENT BY AIR IS STANDARD PROCEDURE AT KARACHI WHEN, IN FACT, IT HAS ONLY BEEN DONE ONCE SO FAR-FOR RECENT TASK FORCE EXERCISE-AND IS PLANNED FOR ONE MORE VISIT IN EARLY MARCH.).

6. IF MAJOR US/PAK DIFFERENCES RESOLVED AMICABLY, WE DO NOT SECRET

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BELIEVE THAT FREQUENCY OF FLAGSHIP VISITS RECOMMENDED REFTEL WOULD GENERAGE GOP REQUEST FOR POLITICAL OR MILITARY QUID PRO QUO. NUMBER OF FLAGSHIP VISITS WOULD BE SMALL PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL SHIP VISIT SCHEDULE. IF CONCERNS MENTIONED ABOVE ARE MET, WE DO NOT BELIEVE GOP WOULD ATTACH SIGNIFICANT IMPORTANCE TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW FORMAT OR SEE IT AS HAVING MAJOR IMPACT ON US/PAK BILATERAL RELATIONS.

7. WE FIND ESPECIALLY ATTRACTIVE SUGGESTION CONTAINED PARA 5 OF TEHRAN'S 1474 THAT MIDEASTFOR ARRANGEMENTS BE QUIETLY TERMINATED AND VISITS FROM SHIPS NOW ASSIGNED TO MIDEASTFOR BE TREATED AS ROUTINE PORT CALLS. IF THIS COULD BE ARRANGED- WHILE STILL HAVING THE BAHRAIN FACILITY AVAILABLE TO THE EXTENT SUGGESTED REFTEL- WE WOULD ENVISION NO DIFFICIULTIES WITH GOP WHATSOEVER AND PROBLEMS OF PUBLICLY HANDLING MIDEASTFOR PORT CALLS NOTED ABOVE WOULD NOT ARISE.
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